

CALIFORNIA'S HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAM

Office of the
Secretary
for Education



CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOLS FOCUSING ON HIGHER STANDARDS

California's Public School Accountability Act, enacted by Governor Davis and the California Legislature in 1999, established the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). The CAHSEE is one part of California's standards-based education system that assesses student performance on California's rigorous academic content standards in mathematics and English language arts. The aim is to ensure that all students will have mastered skills needed to do well in the workplace and in college.

One of 24 states that require students to take and pass a graduation exam, California offers students multiple opportunities for testing and retesting of students beginning in the 10th grade. Tenth graders in the 2001-02 school year were tested in March through May, and those who did not pass one or both parts of the exam have 7 additional opportunities to retake and pass those sections of the exam before graduation in 2004.

School districts up and down the state have revamped efforts to help middle and high school students strengthen algebra, reading and writing skills. Record numbers of students were enrolled in summer school to improve their skills. Additionally, since California's algebra requirement for graduation was instituted in 2000, more students are enrolled in algebra. One out of three 9th grade students is currently being tested on California's Algebra I Standards Test, and an expected one out of three 8th grade students will be assessed in algebra this year.

HOW SCHOOL DISTRICTS ARE HELPING STUDENTS STRENGTHEN SKILLS

IN SAN DIEGO, more than 30,000 students in all grades attended summer school. For students who did not pass both sections of the exit exam administered this spring, all high schools offered small, intensive standards-based courses through the summer. High need high schools offered summer intensives with no more than 10 students per teacher. Currently 2,500 10th and 11th grade students have been identified to receive extended day standards-based classes to focus on math and English language arts.

IN LOS ANGELES UNIFIED, key to intervention are strategies designed to gauge student progress more frequently to more effectively target areas of weakness. As many as 35,000 middle and high school students took remedial summer reading courses, and during the upcoming winter intercession, a new 6-week English language arts intervention course will be offered for 10th grade students, including English learners. Some local districts have instituted 2-hour block reading programs during the school day and have piloted computer-based algebra tutoring programs.

IN SAN FRANCISCO UNIFIED, high schools revamped summer school curriculum and added content specialists in math and English language arts at high school campuses.

IN OAKLAND UNIFIED some 15,000 students in all grades attended summer school. The district conducted extensive outreach efforts to all families and students about a four-week intensive summer program called "CAHSEE Success" for 10th grade students who did not pass the first time. Beginning in November and through February, the same program will be offered before and after school.

TARGETING ACADEMIC SUPPORT UNDER THE DAVIS ADMINISTRATION

At a time when more is being asked of students, Governor Davis has increased funding every year to provide \$493 million this year for intensive remedial instruction, algebra academies and intensive reading programs for 1.2 million students struggling in core subjects. Since 2000, a \$250 million statewide standards-based program has been targeted to improve the English language and literacy skills of students who are experiencing difficulty learning English and difficulty in reading. This fall, more than 600 low performing middle and high schools will receive additional significant state funding to improve the quality of instruction. This week Governor Davis signed legislation to provide school districts funding for systemic high school reform planning in partnership with the Gates and Carnegie foundations, to expand distance learning at high schools, and legislation that redirects federal funds to create effective high school after-school programs.